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General Assembly

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83rd plenary meeting
Monday, 21 March 2005, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ping ..... (Gabon)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda items 45 and 55 (*continued*)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Report of the Secretary-General (A/59/2005)

The President (*spoke in French*): Members will recall that the General Assembly held a joint debate on the two agenda items at its 58th to 60th plenary meetings, on 22 and 23 November 2004.

Members will also recall that, at its 68th plenary meeting, on 8 December 2004, the Secretary-General addressed the General Assembly on the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (A/59/565 and Corr.1)

Thereafter, the Assembly held informal consultations of the plenary on the report of the High-level Panel on 8 and 9 December 2004, during which 23 speakers took the floor, and from 27 to 31 January 2005, during which 97 speakers took the floor.

Members will further recall that, at the informal consultations of the plenary on 25 January, in the course of which 19 speakers took the floor, and also on 10 and 11 February 2005, during which 51 speakers took the floor, Member States exchanged views on the report on the Millennium Project, which has now been circulated in document A/59/727.

The General Assembly held further informal consultations of the plenary from 22 to 24 February 2005 to exchange views on both reports. In the course of those consultations, 81 speakers took the floor.

Subsequently, by a letter dated 28 February 2005, I forwarded to the Secretary-General the summaries of the informal consultations held by the Assembly and recommendations submitted by Member States on both reports.

Recalling General Assembly resolutions 55/162 of 14 December 2000 and 59/145 of 17 December 2004, the Assembly now has before it a report by the Secretary-General entitled "In larger freedom: towards security, development and human rights for all", circulated in document A/59/2005, which has just been distributed in the Hall.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan.

The Secretary-General: Mr. President, thank you for allowing me to present to the Assembly, in person, the five-year progress report that it requested from me on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration.

The main message of that report is that the aims of the Declaration can be achieved, but only if you, the

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Member States, are willing to adopt a package of specific, concrete decisions this year.

Some of these decisions are so important that they need to be taken at the level of heads of State and Government. It is therefore very fortunate that your heads of State and Government have agreed to come here for a summit meeting in September. I am giving you my report six months ahead of that meeting so that your Governments have ample time to consider it. My hope is that world leaders, when they arrive here in September, will be ready to take the decisions that are needed, and I hope they will adopt them as a package.

As in any such list of proposals, there are items which seem more important to some than to others, and items about which some have reservations, while others consider them essential. The temptation is to treat the list as an à la carte menu and select only those that one especially fancies. But in this case, that approach will not work.

What I am proposing amounts to a comprehensive strategy. It gives equal weight and attention to the three great purposes of the Organization: development, security and human rights, all of which must be underpinned by the rule of law. Some States may think that we should give priority to one of those purposes over the others; and, within each of them, many States will have their particular preferences.

But I do not need to remind the Assembly that this is an Organization of 191 Member States. We all know that global problems can best be solved if all States work together. We must also accept that that will only happen if, within the common strategy, all States see their specific concerns addressed.

I argue in the report that I am profoundly convinced that the threats which face us are of equal concern to all. I have called the report "In Larger Freedom", because I believe that those words from the Charter convey the idea that development, security and human rights go hand in hand. In a world of interconnected threats and opportunities, it is in each country's self-interest that all of those challenges be addressed effectively. The cause of larger freedom can be advanced only if nations work together; and the United Nations can help only if it is remoulded as an effective instrument of their common purpose.

Members may or may not find my argument convincing. But please remember, in any event, that if you need the help of other States to achieve your objectives, you must also be willing to help them achieve their objectives. That is why I urge you to treat my proposals as a single package.

Let me now briefly describe what I propose.

The report is divided into four main sections. The first three set out priorities for action in the fields of development, security and human rights, while the last deals with global institutions — mainly the United Nations itself, which must be, as the Millennium Declaration says, "a more effective instrument" for pursuing those priorities.

The first part of the report, entitled "Freedom from Want", proposes specific decisions for implementing the bargain struck three years ago in Monterrey between developed and developing countries.

I ask every developing country to adopt and to begin to implement, by next year, a comprehensive national strategy bold enough to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, and to mobilize all its resources behind that strategy.

Specifically, I ask developing countries to improve their governance, uphold the rule of law, combat corruption and adopt an inclusive approach to development, making space for civil society and the private sector to play their full role. The challenge of development is too big for Governments to face alone.

I ask every developed country to support these strategies by increasing the amount it spends on development and debt relief and doing whatever it can to level the playing-field for world trade. Specifically, I ask developed countries to commit themselves this year to complete the Doha round of trade negotiations no later than 2006 and, as a first step, to give immediate duty-free and quota-free market access to all exports from the least developed countries.

I also ask them to commit themselves to reach by 2015 the target of spending 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product on official development assistance. This increase must be front-loaded through an international finance facility, since, if we are to reach the Goals by 2015, we need the increased spending right away. For the longer term, other innovative sources of financing must be considered.

All Governments must be accountable for fulfilling their part of this bargain, both to their own peoples and to each other.

I stress that development must be sustainable. All our efforts will be in vain if their results are reversed by continued degradation of the environment and depletion of our natural resources.

I am glad that the Kyoto Protocol has now entered into force, albeit three years after the deadline set by the Millennium Declaration, but I also note that it extends only until 2012 and that some major emitters of carbon remain outside it. I ask all States to agree that scientific advances and technological innovations must be mobilized now to develop tools for mitigating climate change and that a more inclusive international framework must be developed for stabilizing greenhouse gas emissions beyond 2012, with broader participation by all emitters, both developed and developing countries.

And I recommend that Member States consider building on one of this Organization's clear strengths by setting up a $1 billion voluntary fund to allow us to bring rapid and effective relief to the victims of sudden disasters, whether natural or man-made. We were able to do this after the recent tsunami thanks to the rapid response from donors, but we should be ready to do it whenever and wherever an emergency occurs.

In the second part of the report, entitled "Freedom from fear", I ask all States to agree on a new security consensus, by which they commit themselves to treat any threat to one of them as a threat to all, and to work together to prevent catastrophic terrorism, stop the proliferation of deadly weapons, end civil wars and build lasting peace in war-torn countries.

Among the many specific proposals in this area, I ask all States to complete, sign and implement a comprehensive convention on terrorism, based on a clear and agreed definition, as well as a convention on nuclear terrorism and a fissile material cut-off treaty. I also ask Member States to agree to establish a peace-building commission within the United Nations to help countries make the transition from war to lasting peace.

In the third part of the report, entitled "Freedom to live in dignity", I urge all States to agree to strengthen the rule of law, human rights and democracy in concrete ways. In particular, I ask them to embrace the principle of the "responsibility to protect" as a basis for collective action against genocide, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity — recognizing that this responsibility lies first and foremost with each individual State, but also that, if national authorities are unable or unwilling to protect their citizens, the responsibility then shifts to the international community and that, in the last resort, the Security Council may take enforcement action according to the Charter.

Among other measures, I also ask all States to ratify and implement all treaties relating to the protection of civilians and to agree to — and within their means, contribute to — a democracy fund at the United Nations, which would provide funding and technical assistance to countries seeking to establish or strengthen their democracy.

In the final part of the report, on "Strengthening the United Nations", I set out proposals for making this Organization the instrument through which all its Members can agree on the strategies outlined in the first three parts and help each other to implement them. This reflects my long-held view that, in order to do its job, the United Nations must be brought fully into line with today's realities. It can and must be a representative and efficient world organization, open and accountable to the public as well as to Governments.

I start with proposals for the revitalization of the General Assembly, to which the Millennium Declaration rightly assigned a central position as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations, but which in recent times has suffered from declining prestige and has not made the contribution that it should to our activities. I am asking heads of State or Government to reverse this by instructing representation to adopt at the sixtieth session a comprehensive package of reforms, by resolving to focus the Assembly's agenda on major substantive issues of the day and by establishing mechanisms through which it can engage fully and systematically with civil society, as recommended by the Cardoso report (A/58/817).

I then recommend a system of three councils, covering respectively international peace and security, economic and social issues and human rights. This reflects the priorities set out in the earlier parts of the report, on which I believe there is broad consensus. The first two of those councils already exist, of course,

but they need to be strengthened. The third requires a far-reaching overhaul and upgrading of our human rights machinery.

First, I urge Member States to make the Security Council more broadly representative of the international community as a whole, as well as of the geopolitical realities of today. This important issue has been discussed for too long. I believe Member States should agree to take a decision on it — preferably by consensus, but in any case before the summit — making use of one or another of the options presented in the report of the High-level Panel (A/59/565). And I suggest that the renewed Security Council should make clear in a resolution the principles by which it intends to be guided when deciding whether or not to authorize the use of force.

Secondly, I make proposals for enabling the Economic and Social Council, whose functions are clearly relevant to our all-important development agenda, to play the leading role that should be expected of it in making and implementing coherent United Nations policies for development.

And thirdly, I ask Member States to create a new council to fulfil one of the primary purposes of the Organization, which clearly now requires more effective operational structures: the promotion of human rights. This would replace the present Commission on Human Rights, whose capacity to perform its tasks has been undermined by its declining credibility and professionalism. The human rights council, I suggest, should be smaller than the Commission and should be elected directly by a two-thirds majority of this Assembly.

I also make far-reaching proposals for the reform of the Secretariat, which must be more flexible, transparent and accountable in serving the priorities of Member States and the interests of the world's peoples, and for introducing greater coherence into the work of the United Nations system as a whole, especially its response to humanitarian emergencies and its handling of environmental issues.

I make no apology, my dear friends, for the detailed, matter-of-fact nature of this presentation. As far as detail goes, I assure you it is merely the tip of the iceberg. I trust that you will read my report in full. You will find in it many more proposals than I have had time to describe here. As for being matter-of-fact, I have deliberately spared you any flights of rhetoric. This Hall has heard enough high-sounding declarations to last us for some decades to come. We all know what the problems are, and we all know what we have promised to achieve. What is needed now is not more declarations or promises, but action: action to fulfil the promises already made.

I believe my report provides a clear programme of actions that are fully within the power of Governments to take. I urge members once again to study it. And I urge heads of State or Government to be ready to take those decisions when they come here next September for the summit.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

With today's issuance of the Secretary-General's comprehensive report entitled "In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all" (A/59/2005), we are entering the second phase of the preparatory process for the September 2005 high-level plenary meeting. Aside from that important date, however, the Secretary-General has once again provided us with a set of ideas and proposals that, I am certain, will nourish our debates with a view to reforming the Organization and adapting it to the century's challenges. In that connection, I must warmly congratulate the Secretary-General, for, with his characteristic intelligence, vision and courage, he has met an important expectation of Member States and of the international community.

It is now up to the General Assembly to consider the comprehensive report just submitted by the Secretary-General. The Assembly will also have to take the urgent decisions that are essential if we are to make decisive progress towards attaining the noble and vital objective of building, in a sustainable manner, a world free from hunger and fear — a world that is safer and freer, and also more just and based on the rule of law. The time remaining to us between now and September 2005 is very limited, and we all know that not a single day goes by in which the planet's many scourges do not claim many new victims throughout the world.

Failing to act resolutely to put an end to this vicious circle would subject our collective responsibility to the irrevocable judgement of history. Therefore, I agree that the time has come for action: coordinated and joint action. Over the next few days, the General Assembly will set out to define the terms

of reference for the essential decisions that it will have to take at the highest level in September 2005.

It is from that perspective that I intend to begin intensive general and thematic consultations on the comprehensive report just submitted to us. Starting on 6 April — in two weeks' time — after Member States have had the time to acquaint themselves with the contents of the report, we will hold informal consultations of the whole in New York and in their respective capitals. Those general consultations will be followed by thematic consultations to be held by the 10 facilitators on the four main clusters of issues contained in the report. To that end, in the coming days I will communicate to members a detailed plan for our consultations.

I take this opportunity to recall that we still need to address a set of pending issues concerning the modalities for organizing the September 2005 high-level plenary meeting. Following the consultations held by the two facilitators on that issue, I intend to distribute to members, by the end of this week, a draft resolution that the General Assembly will, I hope, be able to adopt without delay. As I have already stressed, I will ensure that all of the consultations are held in a transparent, open and inclusive manner.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda items 45 and 55.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.